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# NUTRITION

# PROGRAM NEWS

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## PUERTO RICO NUTRITION COMMITTEE CELEBRATES 25th ANNIVERSARY

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The anniversary meeting of the Puerto Rico Nutrition Committee was held December 14, 1965, at Hato Rey, Puerto Rico, with 25 members and many guests attending. Outstanding accomplishments and services of Dr. Lydia J. Roberts, who directed the work of the Committee for 22 years, were recognized.

The anniversary program focused attention on the structure of the organization as a basis for making changes. Activities and accomplishments of working subcommittees were reviewed. Subcommittees carry out nutrition activities with the support of the board of directors and the cooperation of the entire Committee membership.

At the time of its 25th anniversary, the Committee was searching for new programs. It was particularly interested in ways to increase membership and to expand activities.

Public and private agencies that perform activities related to nutrition were invited to name representatives to the Committee. In updating the membership list, the Committee sent a questionnaire to each member agency. Agencies were asked to submit ideas and recommendations for future projects and activities.

### Committee programs and activities

Four regular meetings are held each year. Programs present various means of improving nutritional levels in the Puerto Rican population.

Interesting examples of such effort during the anniversary year:

1. A demonstration of the food products manufactured from bananas. Discussion emphasized the importance of such products in the diet.

This issue of NUTRITION PROGRAM NEWS describes the Puerto Rico Nutrition Committee after 25 years and its anniversary tribute to the late Dr. Lydia J. Roberts.

2. An orientation session concerning Head Start—what had been done, what was currently being done, and plans for the future.
3. A detailed report on an exhibit presented in Chicago, Ill., in November 1965, at the Western Hemisphere Nutrition Congress.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ANNIVERSARY YEAR

### Preschool education program—Head Start

The October meeting of the Puerto Rico Nutrition Committee was devoted to Head Start, the preschool education program. A representative from the Department of Public Education in Puerto Rico participated in this session. She spoke on "Preschool Teaching in Puerto Rico and Its Projections for the Future."

The speaker explained that the Economic Opportunities Act had assigned funds for the orientation of preschool children in areas where families have an income of less than \$3,000 a year. A total of 127,000 children were included in the program in Puerto Rico during the summer of 1965. Six hundred primary and kindergarten teachers, 600 students who acted as teacher assistants, 32 school directors, and 23 supervisors were involved. In addition, doctors, nurses, janitors, and secretaries were hired. School lunch personnel at the schools provided lunch for the

children during the 2 months of the summer program. The children were given a complete lunch and an additional glass of milk. Effort was also made toward improving their physical, social, and psychological development.

Medical examinations of the children revealed 194 cases of malnutrition and 141 cases of anemia. They also identified children with parasites, hernias, and other physical difficulties.

Federal funds provided \$900,000 and the Puerto Rican government contributed \$800,000—making a total of \$1,700,000. The Puerto Rican share was used primarily for teachers' salaries. Many participants in this program were members of the Puerto Rico Nutrition Committee.

### **Western Hemisphere Nutrition Congress exhibit**

The exhibit prepared for this Congress was another successful activity of the year.

"Puerto Rico Nutrition Bootstrap—25 Years of Progress" portrayed the advancement made by the Committee and included a tribute to Dr. Lydia J. Roberts. Specialists from the University of Puerto Rico, the Agricultural Extension Service, the Health Department, and the Public Education Department worked on this project.

In addition to the exhibit, three publications of the Committee were sent to the meeting in Chicago:

1. "The Puerto Rico Nutrition Committee," a brochure on the history of the Committee.
2. "Nutritional Research in Puerto Rico, Past, Present, and Future," a report on a symposium on nutritional research.
3. "A Basic Food Pattern for Puerto Rico," a reprint from the Journal of the American Dietetic Association, 1954.

The food pattern, designed by Dr. Roberts, is based on the foods common to the Island and on the food habits of the people. The chart has two aims:

1. To recognize the foods Puerto Ricans eat daily.
2. To emphasize additional foods needed to improve the nutritional quality of diets.

The chart has five divisions. The first division—"Foods That Almost Everyone Eats Now"—includes rice, beans, starchy vegetables and fruits, codfish, lard, sugar, and coffee. The remaining divisions consist of the four food groups. These are milk; meat, fish, fowl, eggs; "greens and yellows;" and fresh native Puerto Rican fruits. Dr. Roberts emphasized that choices should be made from all food groups to insure good diets.

The chart has been adopted as a nutritional guide to improve food habits of the Puerto Rican people. It is being used as a basis for nutrition teaching throughout the Island.

The basic food pattern for Puerto Rico is not suitable per se for other population groups. However, it is highly adaptable and contains ideas that have been proved effective.

### **A TRIBUTE TO DR. ROBERTS**

The organization and activities of the Puerto Rico Nutrition Committee are a tribute to the efforts of a person who worked untiringly in all its actions, activities, and projects—the late Dr. Lydia J. Roberts.

In 1946, Dr. Roberts joined the staff as Professor and Chairman of Home Economics, University of Puerto Rico, after she retired as Chairman of Home Economics at the University of Chicago. She first went to Puerto Rico in 1943, to study nutrition conditions at the request of the War Food Administration.

### **Nutrition workshop**

As a result of her trip and her recommendations, a Community Workshop in Nutrition was held at the University of Puerto Rico in June, 1943.

This workshop brought together people from different agencies in the Island to help improve the nutritional health of the Puerto Rican people. Participants studied nutritional problems and suggested measures for solving them. The workshop found that the total number of people reached by nutrition programs was very small when compared to the number who needed help. It also found that nutrition education programs were limited by the lack of—

1. Coordination and integration between the work of different agencies.
2. Equipment.
3. Trained personnel.
4. Basic data on the nutritive value of Puerto Rican foods.
5. Information on the nutritional status of the Puerto Ricans.
6. Illustrative material.

As a result of this workshop, the Puerto Rico Nutrition Committee was reorganized in 1943. It was originally formed in 1941, but most of the programs date from the reorientation.



A coordinated, Island-wide nutrition program was proposed. Plans were made for local nutrition committees in each of the Island's 76 towns.

The Puerto Rico Nutrition Committee, as it now functions, is the direct outcome of the workshop. Its objectives are an outgrowth of Dr. Roberts' planning.

### Expanded activities

The Committee stepped up its activities to include a short nutrition course for laymen, Nutrition Week, conferences, and preparation of nutrition education materials.

These activities resulted in intensive home food production campaigns; development and distribution of tables showing the vitamin values of foods commonly used in Puerto Rico; preparation of short basic nutrition courses for elementary school teachers; a campaign to promote the use of soybeans; and an intensive educational campaign to promote the use of nonfat dry milk. A total of 1,138 demonstrations were given, with an attendance of 34,752 persons.

### Research

In order to know the needs of the Puerto Rican families, Dr. Roberts and her assistant, in 1946, studied family characteristics, housing conditions, diets of families, and educational levels and cultural patterns of 1,044 representative families. They published "Patterns of Living in Puerto Rican Families" in 1949.

They learned that 75 percent of the families lived on diets that were markedly inadequate, 18 percent lived on diets that were far from desirable, and only about 7 percent came close to meeting dietary requirements.

As a result of this study, the Department of Health of Puerto Rico established a Bureau of Nutrition and Dietetics in 1951. It conducts research in areas of nutrition closely allied to public health.

A project called Dona Elena—after a community in Comerio—occupied much of Dr. Roberts' time and efforts. This project was described in the July-August 1960 NUTRITION COMMITTEE NEWS. With the assistance of the Puerto Rico Nutrition Committee, Dr. Roberts worked to show how good food patterns could be developed in Dona Elena.

The project was an outgrowth of a 1958 plan to demonstrate the effects of good nutrition on the physical well-being of the people, especially the children, of Puerto Rico.

From a study of the problems concerning food and nutrition in one community, Dr. Roberts hoped to devise a

program that could be adapted to similar communities. The objectives of the plan:

1. To survey conditions related to food and nutrition.
2. To determine nutritional status of the children by medical examination.
3. To obtain height and weight measurements and other aspects of physical status of the children.
4. To provide a combined educational and feeding program centered in the school.
5. To resurvey and give physical checkups at the end of a year.

Dona Elena is a typical isolated community—one of nearly 200 such communities in Puerto Rico. Nutrition is a major problem in all of these communities. Dr. Roberts and her co-workers decided that education was the best way to break the vicious circle of poverty, disease, diminished productivity, and hunger.

The result of the Dona Elena project was the establishment of a Commission for Improvement of Isolated Communities to develop programs tailored to the specific needs of such areas. This Commission works to improve living conditions in such areas throughout the Island.

In addition to Dr. Roberts' interests in community service, her contributions included identifying, studying, and finding solutions to the nutritional problems in Puerto Rican communities.

As Chairman of Home Economics at the University of Puerto Rico, she revised the curriculum to align it with the customs and living habits of Puerto Rican people. As a result, home economics in the University became dynamic and forceful. She instituted a program to encourage Puerto Rican home economists to take advanced study; she strengthened the instructional program to attract serious students. Dr. Roberts developed the first dietetic internship program outside the continental United States.

Dr. Roberts' vision seemed to broaden in the course of 22 years of tenure. She was immensely interested in any project to improve nutrition, particularly the nutrition of children. Her study on Better Breakfasts for School Children was a great success in Puerto Rico. Her careful directions were presented simply and clearly. She touched every area of nutrition with vigor—from her dealings with children to her work with low-income families.

The success of the Puerto Rico Nutrition Committee at the time of its 25th anniversary attests to the wisdom and leadership of the late Lydia Roberts.

## MATERIALS

Listing of these materials is for the information of readers and does not necessarily mean recommendation. Materials or information concerning materials may be obtained from the addresses given.

Symbol INF refers to Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 20250. For USDA publications, please send requests on a post card; include title of publication, your name, address, and zip code.

### Consumer education

**Nutritive value of food available for consumption, United States, 1909-1964.** B. Friend. ARS 62-14, 18 pp., Jan. 1966. Consumer and Food Economics Research Division, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Hyattsville, Md. 20782. Please order directly from the Division.

**Poultry in family meals: A guide for consumers.** Human Nutrition Research Division, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Home and Garden Bulletin 110, 30 pp., Mar. 1966. (Supersedes HG-45). Available INF.

**Poultry inspection—A consumer's safeguard.** Program Aid 299, 1965. Consumer and Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Please order directly from Consumer and Marketing Service.

### Food processing

**Home canning of meat and poultry.** Human Nutrition Research Division, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Home and Garden Bulletin 106, 24 pp., Feb. 1966. (Supersedes HG-6.) Available INF.

### Institutional management

**Food service in institutions.** 1966. Fourth edition. Bessie Brooks West, Levelle Wood and Virginia F. Harger. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., pp. 702. \$12.

### Nutrition

**Foundations of nutrition.** 1966. Sixth edition. Clara Mae Taylor and Orrea Florence Pye. New York: The Macmillan Company, pp. 564. \$7.50.

**Principles of nutrition.** 1965. Second edition. Eva D. Wilson, Katherine H. Fisher and Mary E. Fuqua. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., pp. 596. \$7.25.